

Committee on Resources

Subcommittee on National Parks & Public Lands

Testimony

Testimony of Margaret Tutwiler

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to appear before this committee today and testify on behalf of H.R. 3981. I am pleased to be here representing the Board of Trustees of the Kenmore Association.

Kenmore, located in historic Fredericksburg, Virginia, is the home of George Washington's only sister, Betty. It is one of the nation's oldest house museums - built in 1775. The preservation of the Kenmore house was among the first national preservation efforts, second only to the effort to save Mount Vernon. In 1922, local Fredericksburg citizens joined in raising funds to purchase the historic house and grounds as a "sacred trust," thereby saving the house from destruction.

The Kenmore Association, Inc. was incorporated in May 1922 and was charged with the perpetual stewardship, maintenance and management of the Kenmore house. In 1926, the Kenmore Board of Regents was created to ensure the preservation of the property. Today, with over one hundred women representing all fifty states, Great Britain and France, they continue to guide the Kenmore Association's activities, educational programs, and fund-raising efforts. Kenmore is governed by a sixteen-member Board of Trustees comprised of businessmen and women from throughout the United States. Kenmore is open year round as a house museum and has over twenty-five thousand visitors annually.

In addition to the colonial artifacts found on the grounds and the unparalleled craftsmanship in the house itself, the Kenmore property is of considerable historical significance. George Washington's sister, Betty, lived at Kenmore with her husband Colonel Fielding Lewis. During the American Revolution, Colonel Lewis was one of the chief financial backers of General Washington's army.

Only a few generations later, Kenmore experienced the ravages of the Civil War. It served as a hospital for the Union Army.

The Kenmore house is an important part of our American heritage because of its association with our nation's Founding Fathers, its importance as a splendid example of colonial art and craftsmanship, and its witness to American life for more than two hundred twenty years.

In 1996, the Kenmore Association led one of the most important preservation battles of recent years - the fight to save George Washington's Ferry Farm from commercial development.

Ferry Farm, located just across the Rappahannock River from Fredericksburg, is where George Washington spent his formative years - roughly ages six to twenty. In 1996 a commercial retail entity attempted to purchase and develop a large portion of Ferry Farm. The Kenmore Association stepped in and purchased the entire Ferry Farm property in order to save the historical farm from commercial development.

George Washington's Ferry Farm is a unique site. Ferry Farm is the last place associated with George Washington that has not been protected for the American people. The preservation of George Washington's

Ferry Farm is a compelling preservation undertaking.

Every American knows the fabled stories associated with this historic place. For instance, Ferry Farm is where the legendary story of the cherry tree took place. The young Washington's words - "I cannot tell a lie" - are fixed in our national memory. Ferry Farm is more than the setting for fables. It was the place that prepared Washington to overcome the challenges of his life - experiences that shaped the character that made him the most revered of our Founding Fathers. At Ferry Farm the character was formed that helped shape our nation.

We need the National Park Service to help us protect Ferry Farm for future generations by acquiring an easement - ensuring that George Washington's Ferry Farm will be protected forever.

Working in conjunction with the Park Service, in a unique public/private stewardship, the Kenmore Association with over seventy years of preservation experience can protect and manage this land of extraordinary importance to our nation's heritage. The passage of this proposed legislation will ensure Ferry Farm's safe keeping.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for your time and attention. This concludes my prepared remarks. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

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